

Features

Informal approach aids Southern Tier's financially burdened

By Lee Strong

The Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry (STOSM)'s Elmira office takes a small-town approach to the Courier Journal/Catholic Charities Christmas Fund, thanks to Sister Gloria Ruocco, RSM.

"We don't advertise (about Christmas Fund money)," Sister Ruocco explained. "People tell one another, or I hear about someone in need. Everyone knows everyone around here, and when they see someone who needs help, they let me know."

Sister Ruocco, in her role as the office's emergency services coordinator, keeps in touch with people's needs in Elmira and Chemung County year-round. This year, she said, the needs have increased.

"People are really hurting," Sister Ruocco remarked. "There are a lot of people out there who've lost jobs because of closing factories. Many people (who have jobs) have ones that don't pay well, so they don't have (health) insurance. If they or someone in their family gets sick, it overwhelms them."

Christmas is an especially hard time for many families, she noted. In addition to bills parents can't pay, they must face the prospect of not being able to buy Christmas presents for their children.

"The other day we had a case where a man who is an outpatient at the (Elmira Psychiatric Center) was depressed because (he and his wife) don't have anything for Christmas for the children," she reported. Christmas Fund money and donations from area churches will help to buy the children the boots and coats that the family needs."

Sometimes, people take out their frustrations on Sister Ruocco. One day recently a woman came to the office and began yelling at her. "She was panicking," the Mercy sister explained. "She has a child, no rent money, no food, no heat. I listened to her until she got her anger out."

"All (some) of these people want is someone to listen to them," she added.

Sister Ruocco works with families throughout the process of applying for assistance — and beyond. She conducts interviews, verifies individual's and family's needs, arranges for assistance, and frequently accompanies parents when they shop with money or vouchers from STOSM. She also maintains contact with many families throughout the year to make sure that their social-service needs are continuously met.

**COURIER-JOURNAL/
CATHOLIC CHARITIES
CHRISTMAS FUND
% CATHOLIC CHARITIES
1150 BUFFALO ROAD
ROCHESTER NY 14624**



STOSM provides financial and material assistance not only at the agency's Elmira headquarters, but also through outreach offices in Tioga, Steuben and Schuyler Counties. Anthony Barbaro, STOSM's executive director, coordinates the distribution of Christmas Fund monies and other donations to the various offices. These other donations include Christmas baskets from area parishes and churches. The baskets contain not only food, but also clothing, toys and household items.

If the needs of an individual or family can't be met by STOSM's emergency services, Sister Ruocco and other staff members try to refer them to such area social-service or education agencies as the psychiatric center, the

Cooperative Extension, or STOSM's counseling services. Local agencies, in turn, frequently refer individuals to STOSM.

At present, however, Sister Ruocco's attention is focused on Christmas. People keep coming to apply for assistance, and she must determine whether she has the resources available to meet each family's needs, or whether she will have to send them somewhere else.

She finds joy in situations where she can help. "It's so exciting when you see people who get what they need," she said. "When you see the looks on people's faces — the tears in their eyes — (you know) it's God working."

supplemental help in emergencies. She finds holidays especially difficult because of loneliness and limited finances.

91 The L. family consists of husband, wife and two teenage daughters. Mr. L. is a seasonal farm worker. During this time of year, when there is little or no farm work, he tries to pick up whatever odd jobs he can. After the harvest this year, he and his wife dug

Continued on Page 17

76 This family of three is on public assistance. The two children attend Catholic schools. The mother is looking for work, but is unable to find a job. She is having a difficult time making ends meet, and often goes without to provide for her children.

77 Mrs. R., a single mother with three children, is now expecting her fourth. With welfare, she is barely able to make ends meet. She is attending school in hopes of becoming skilled enough to support her family on her own. With some extra support, she can stay in school during her pregnancy and find a job after the baby is born.

78 A man who is waiting to get into an alcoholic treatment program is temporarily living in one parish's rectory. He has no income, and he hasn't applied for welfare because he expects to get into the program soon. He needs glasses; his only pair was broken during his last drunk before detoxification. The parish has provided him with clothing, food, shelter, and tokens to get to AA meetings daily.

79 This family has a member with special dietary restrictions. The family gets assistance from the local food pantry, but the canned foods they receive are not always on the list of foods permitted for that family member.

80 A Cuban family of four — mother, father, grandmother and four-year-old son — suffered the death of an 11-month-old girl in November. They did not have enough money for the funeral. The father works for minimum wage, and they are trying to get welfare, but for now they have just enough to get by.

81 The father of this family of seven recently was without a job. The family doesn't qualify for welfare; they need help.

82 This older couple has 10 of their children and grandchildren living with them. They have tried to build character in the children, and have had them all attend Catholic school. The family has little money left after buying necessities to provide extra, more satisfying food.

83 A single mother with six children has had her food-stamp allocation reduced because of high rent payments listed on her voucher. She has not received her last three support payments from the children's father, and her welfare subsistence check was also late, forcing her to go to a food cupboard.

84 Mrs. G. is an elderly lady with an arthritic condition who uses a walker and can only stand for a few minutes at a time. She helps care for her son, who has terminal cancer, and her young grandson. They have little money left for food and clothes after rent and prescriptions, and no money at all for toys this Christmas.

85 This young family consists of father, mother, two children in grammar school, and a child in pre-school. The father is a manual laborer who moves from job to job and is currently unemployed. He can't read or write well, and is easily frustrated by job applications and interviews. The temporary, low-paying nature of his jobs increases his frustration. The mother supplements the family income by working as a domestic. The family receives social service assistance, but is barely making it. They also have to struggle with high medical expenses.

86 Mr. and Mrs. I. have a large family and a small income. Mrs. I. can no longer work due to respiratory problems. At times, their medical bills are large. A gift of food would be a big help to this family.

87 Mr. X. is on sick leave from his job due to a disability stemming from a childhood disease. He has used up his sick-leave time and has no ideas what his future job status will be. The birth expenses of the family's two-week-old son depleted their meager savings, and they are in danger of losing their home because they can't keep up the mortgage payments.

88 The mother of this family of five is chronically ill, and the father is unemployed. The mother's support funds are insufficient to meet the family's food and clothing needs.

89 This 47-year-old woman was a battered wife and is now completely alone. She has no contact with her family. An alcoholic, she denies her problem and refuses to accept assistance from any agencies. She is dependent on the local parish for many of her needs.

90 Mrs. C. lives in a remote area of Steuben County with her three children, ages nine, seven and five. She and her husband moved her from out of state three years ago. Last summer, her husband left her. She is struggling to be independent and only asks for

THINK SANTA!

BIGGEST SELECTION OF TIES EVER
From Robert Talbott and others
Huge Selection of Christmas Ties.

Whillock Bros.
TRADITIONAL CLOTHIERS Since 1878

24 WEST MAIN ST. — 454-1816

Monday-Saturday 9:30-5:30

Thursday nites 'til 9 p.m.

AMERICAN EXPRESS • MASTERCARD
VISA • WHILLOCK'S CHARGE

1 Hour FREE parking at any Allright Lot.

BRUNO SEAFOOD

444 LYELL AVENUE • PHONE 647-3170
(Next to the famous Blue Oyster Restaurant)



**Holiday
PRICES**

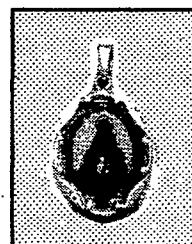
WHOLESALE PRICE for our Retail Customers
Guaranteed LOWEST PRICES IN TOWN!

- SHRIMP SPECIALS for the HOLIDAYS**
- Shell On Shrimp 31/35 per lb. **\$5.00**
- Cooked Shrimp **\$11.45**
- Neptune Cocktail Shrimp 21/25 per lb.
- Shell Tex Cooked Shrimp **\$20.30**
- "Medium to Large" 2 lbs.
- Peeled, Cleaned & Deveined **\$7.95**
- SHRIMP 36/40 per 3 lb. bag per lb.
- Lobster Tails for Holidays Cold Water Tails **\$18.49**
- Warm Water *12" lb.

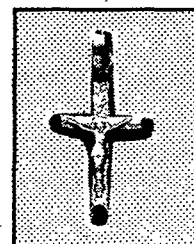
- Octopus
- Clams
- Scallops
- Mussels
- Monk Fish
- Perch
- Frogs Legs
- Oysters
- Lobster Meats
- Crab Legs
- Filet of Sole
- Haddock
- White Fish
- Live Crabs
- Live Eels
- Live Lobsters

OPEN MONDAY THRU SATURDAY 9AM TO 7 PM

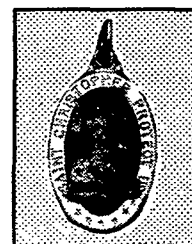
14 KT. MEDALS, CROSSES & CRUCIFIXES FROM The SOURCE



Miraculous
Medals



Crucifixes



St. Christopher
Medals

SAINTS MEDALS INCLUDE:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| St. Anne | Infant of Prague | Mount Carmel |
| St. Anthony | St. John The Baptist | Nino De Atoche |
| Assumption | St. Joseph | St. Patrick |
| St. Barbara | St. Jude | St. Paul |
| St. Christopher | La Providencia | St. Peregrine |
| Mother Cabrini | St. Lazarus | Perpetual Help |
| Ecce Homo | Loreto | St. Peter |
| St. Elizabeth Seton | Lourdes | St. Raphael |
| St. Florian | St. Lucy | St. Roch |
| St. George | St. Martha | Sacred Heart |
| St. Gerald | St. Martin | Immaculate Heart of Mary |
| Guadalupe | Matka Boska | Lady of Sorrows |
| Guardian Angel | St. Matthew | St. Theresa |
| Caridad Del Cobre | St. Michael | Holy Trinity |
| Holy Spirit | Monserrate | |
| Immaculate Conception | | |

SPECIAL ORDER NOW FOR CHRISTMAS — LAYAWAY WELCOME

60% OFF 14 KT. ITALIAN GOLD

The SOURCE

EAST ROCHESTER MALL
381-5719
1300 MONROE AVE. (LAUREL BLDG.)
586-9145
560 RIDGE RD. WEST
621-6280

Hours: Mon.-Fri. 10-9, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 12-5